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SUBJECT: INFORMATION ON FORCED LABOR AND CHILD LABOR IN THE
PRODUCTION OF GOODS--PAPUA NEW GUINEA

REF: STATE 00043120

¶1. Summary: Papua New Guinea is a developing country with an agricultural-based economy. Its key export commodities are in the forestry (logging), minerals (copper, gold), oil and gas, agricultural (tea and coffee), fisheries and tourism sectors. Because Papua New Guinea lacks an established manufacturing base, children work in households, in subsistence agriculture as laborers, and as stock persons in family-related businesses, where they perform menial labor. Children also work in the commercial agricultural sector, primarily in tea and coffee plantations during the harvest season (coffee is Papua New Guinea's #1 export), but there is very little hard data or evidence that children are subjected to forced or exploitative child labor conditions. Children also work as panhandlers and as street and road-side vendors, selling such items as food, cigarettes, betel nut, CD's and DVD's. A lack of available data on child labor-related issues and other economic indicators makes it nearly impossible to ascertain the extent, if any, of child forced labor in Papua New Guinea.

¶2. The lack of documentation on the nature and incidence of child labor in Papua New Guinea can be directly attributed to the fact that child labor, as envisioned in the ILO convention No. 182, Article 3, is not widespread in Papua New Guinea. The use of children as sources of menial labor in Papua New Guinean culture, is seen as a necessary part of everyday existence and as an additional source of income for the family. The general high unemployment rate, abundance of cheap labor and the inherent poverty in Papua New Guinea virtually assures that children may find themselves as a continued source of low-skilled, though not necessarily harmful or dangerous jobs. Children, especially young girls, are seen as economic necessities by their families and therefore help out by performing domestic and gardening work around the homes and by helping with the seasonal coffee and tea harvests. They also are employed as stock persons in neighborhood grocery stores (with wages paid directly to their parents), and as street vendors. Some children panhandle as an additional source of income. Businesses employ vocational age children (16 - 17 years of age) in the service and trades industry to avoid paying higher wages to older and more experienced workers. There is very little information available that would indicate children are being forced to work under forced labor conditions to produce goods for internal consumption or export.

¶3. Children work primarily in the informal sector, such as within households, especially with informally adopted children by uncles, aunts or other close relatives. This evidence is anecdotal as no statistics or records regarding informal adoptions and subsequent abuses are kept by the police or any social welfare agency. There is ample evidence that children seek work in the sex-related industry, such as in nightclubs and in the making of pornographic movies, but there is little direct evidence that they are being trafficked into those activities by either organized crime organizations or nightclub owners. Both Government and non-governmental Officials and social workers place the blame for children becoming involved in the sex trade on poverty and the parents' desperation for money rather than any other economic factor.

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